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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9100

UNCLAS NOUAKCHOTT 000094

SIPDIS

DOL/ILAB FOR LEYLA STROTKAMP, RACHEL RIGBY AND TINA MCCARTER; DRL/ILCSR FOR SARAH MORGAN AND G/TIP FOR LUIS CDEBACA

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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [EIND](#) [ETRD](#) [KTIP](#) [PHUM](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: MAURITANIA: CHILD LABOR AND FORCED LABOR

REF: STATE 131997

¶1. (U) In response to reftel tasking 1, Post found no evidence of the use of forced labor or exploitative child labor in the production of goods in Mauritania.

¶2. (U) Post's response to reftel tasking 2 is as follows:

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Exploitive Child Labor

¶3. (U) In rural areas, children frequently work with their families in activities such as farming (e.g. rice, beans, and vegetables), herding (e.g. goats) and fishing. Children perform a wide range of informal activities in cities such as Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, Kiffa, and Rosso, including domestic labor, street vending, collecting passenger fares in buses, driving donkey carts to collect garbage, and deliver water and construction materials. Young boys, particularly of the Afro-Mauritanian Pulaar tribe, are occasionally placed in the custody of unscrupulous religious teachers who force the children to beg. There were reports from local human rights groups of Mauritanian girls from 5-13 years old being trafficked to the Persian Gulf through arranged marriages and subject to sexual exploitation. Children from families in slave-like relationships to dominant families may work as house help or as herders for their masters in both rural and urban settings.

¶4. (U) In 2009, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and Women in collaboration with UNICEF worked on a study on "Child Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Labor in Mauritania," which was released to the public in January **¶2010**. Data is also available through UNICEF's 2007 Multiple Indicator Cluster Study (MICS).

Laws and Regulations

¶5. (U) In 2009, there were no laws and regulations enacted in regard to exploitative child labor.

¶6. (U) The legal framework was adequate for addressing exploitative child labor but laws are rarely enforced.

Institutions and Mechanisms for Enforcement

- 2C, Sections 1 and 2: HAZARDOUS AND FORCED CHILD LABOR

¶7. (U) The Ministry of Social Affairs, Family and Children is the main responsible for enforcing all laws relating to children. The Children's Department, created in 1995,

promotes and protects children's rights, elaborates and executes child welfare programs, coordinates actions in favor of childhood and elaborates a national policy and executes it. The Ministry of Justice is involved through the Direction of the Judiciary Protection of Children as well as the Ministry of the Interior through the Special Brigade for Minors. The Ministry of Labor also collaborates through its inspector program.

¶18. (U) There are no mechanisms for exchanging information among agencies or to assess effectiveness.

¶19. (U) There is no specific mechanism for making complaints other than Labor inspectors or the Special Brigade for Minors.

¶10. (U) The 2010 budget allotted USD \$848,140 to the Labor Department. According to the Labor Department Director, these funds are slated for the reconstruction of offices and for acquiring resources. No specific budget provisions were made for child labor programs.

¶11. (U) There are currently twenty labor inspectors in Mauritania who receive and investigate complaints. There are no inspectors specifically devoted to child labor. The new government has recruited 40 more inspectors who are presently in training at the National School of Administration.

¶12. (U) The Children's Department told Mission staff it has never received any complaints from Labor Department inspectors. Complaints are rare because the practice of child labor is condoned in Mauritania due to the extreme poverty people live in.

¶13. (U) No children were removed.

¶14. (U) There were no prosecutions.

¶15. (U) No labor cases were closed or resolved.

¶16. (U) There were no convictions.

¶17. (U) No sentences were imposed or served.

¶18. (U) The government's actions to combat exploitative child labor are insufficient.

¶19. (U) The government did not offer any training for investigators or others.

- 2D, Sections I, II and III: Child Trafficking, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Use of Children in Illicit Activities

¶20. (U) The Ministry of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood is the main responsible for enforcing all laws relating to children. The Children's Department, created in 1995, promotes and protects children's rights, elaborates and executes child welfare programs, coordinates actions in favor of children and develops and enacts national policy. The Childhood Department created in 2007 the National Center for the Protection of Children in Difficulty located in the El Mina and Dar Naim districts of Noaukchott. In 2009, the center provided shelter to 270 children, 60 of whom were talibe. The Ministry of Justice is also involved through the Direction of the Judiciary Protection of Children as well as the Ministry of the Interior through the Special Brigade for Minors.

¶21. (U) In 2010, USD \$9,259 from the Ministry of Social Affairs budget is dedicated to the Children's Department.

¶22. (U) The country did not maintain a hotline. Child trafficking/CSE/ use of children in illicit activities violations could be reported to the Special Brigade for Minors or the police.

¶23. (U) No investigations were opened. In 2009, local NGO

SOS Esclaves brought two alleged child slavery cases to the attention of the authorities but judges closed the cases without investigation.

¶24. (U) Sixty talibe were placed at the National Center for the Protection of Children in Difficulty. This center returns children to their families or to their imams asking for guarantees that the children will not be sent back to the streets to beg. It also places children in surrogate families when necessary.

¶25. (U) No arrests were made.

¶26. (U) No cases were resolved.

¶27. (U) There were no convictions.

¶28. (U) The government did not offer any training for investigators responsible for enforcement of child trafficking/CSEC/children in illicit activities.

Government Policies on Child Labor

¶29. (U) The Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood and Family drafted in collaboration with UNICEF a National Strategy for the Protection of Children in Mauritania, which comprises an action plan for 2009-2010.

¶30. (U) The Strategic Framework to Fight Poverty was revised for the 2006-2010 period and integrated Millennium Development goals for children. Nevertheless, the UNICEF/Ministry of Social Affairs report considers that insufficient.

¶31. (U) Funding provided is limited.

¶32. (U) Non-monetary support was provided through personnel for the drafting of the National Strategy for the Protection of Children and the study on "Child Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Labor."

¶33. (U) The government's policies have not been effective. According to the study, child labor in Mauritania continues to increase in violation of international child labor laws. This increase is in contradiction with the law that makes attending school mandatory for children up to 14 years of age. Work conditions are increasingly difficult, work days are long, and many of the children are away from their families for extended periods of time.

¶34. (U) The government did not participate in any commissions or task forces regarding exploitative child labor.

¶35. (U) The government did not sign bilateral, regional or international agreements related to child labor.

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent Child Labor

¶36. (U) The Government of Mauritania participated in a USD \$2.7 million program to return and reintegrate child camel jockeys to their home countries, funded by the United Arab Emirates and implemented by UNICEF. The project ended in February 2009 with the repatriation and compensation of 412 children. In 2009, the second phase of the project with a budget of USD 1 million dollars focused on increasing capacity among the child jockey communities. The government also participated, with civil society, in an awareness campaign about the rights of domestic servants; many of whom are underage.

¶37. (U) The Strategic Framework to Fight Poverty was revised for the 2006-2010 period and integrated Millennium Development goals for children but this is considered insufficient by the most recent UNICEF/Ministry of Social

Affairs study.

¶38. (U) The government has no programs specifically related to child labor. As poverty persists and population grows, it is understood that child labor in Mauritania continues to increase despite national codes.

Continual Progress

¶39. (U) During this reporting period, Mauritania underwent an eleven-month political crisis caused by the August 8, 2008 coup d'etat against democratically elected President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi. Progress in social issues was limited. Newly Elected President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz's government has declared itself committed to improving Mauritania's human rights record. The August 2009 drafting of a National Strategy for the Protection of Children in Mauritania, which comprises an action plan for 2009-2010 is a step forward. Nevertheless, improving the child labor and trafficking situation in Mauritania would require considerable resources for awareness campaigns and assistance programs.

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